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**Title: Destruction of Hindu Temples  
in Tamil Eelam and Sri Lanka**

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## FOREWORD

The very title of this book - DESTRUCTION OF HINDU TEMPLES IN TAMIL EELAM AND SRI LANKA- could raise eyebrows among readers who have only sketchy impressions of the island and its peoples. Ceylon, as Sri Lanka was called before its political name change in 1972, has been an ancient seat of Hinduism and Saivism. Buddhism was subsequently introduced into the island in the third century B.C. during the rule of Emperor Asoka in India. As a recoil against Brahminical authority, Buddhism became a popular ideology in the early centuries of the Christian era. But the latter half of the first millenium A.D. saw a strong Hindu revival and the emergence of the Bhakthi movement in India, resulting in Buddhism suffering a decline in the land of its birth.

It however, found ready acceptance among the Sinhalese who were struggling to find their own separate identity in the face of a resurgence of Tamil culture and the growing might of the Hindu Pallava and Pandyan empires in south India. In time, this gave birth to a historical myth, a make-believe that identified the Sinhalese as the chosen custodians of Buddhism, and the island as a place of special sanctity blessed by the Buddha. This interlinking of land, religion and "race" was to become an intoxicating mix in the minds of the Sinhala-Buddhists through the centuries; their unwillingness to let go this cushioning fantasy (for fear of losing their identity) is the root cause of the prevailing strife in the island to this day. That also explains their ingrained hostility against Tamils, Tamil culture, Hinduism, India, and whatever they feel could be a potential threat to their existence within that special cocoon they had created for themselves.

What sustains and nourishes Sinhala-Buddhist jingoism to this day is a Buddhist chronicle originally written in Pali-the Mahavamsa. Authored by Buddhist monks, and believed to have been written beginning in the sixth century A.D., it is upheld as the only recorded source for the reconstruction of the island's history. It is an inventive interpretation of the coming of the Sinhalese to the island, but it is also, as Sinhala historian K.M.de Silva himself accepts, a work "permeated by a strong religious bias, and encrusted with miracle and invention". (A History of Sri Lanka, Oxford University



Press 1981, p3). But what is worse, it has entrenched in the Sinhala mind anti-Tamil racist beliefs. The book dramatizes the war waged by the Sinhala Prince Gamani (Dutugemunu) against the Tamil ruler Elara (Ellalan) as a triumph of Sinhala proto-nationalism, and the eviction of a foreign invader.

To readers who know the close affinity of both religions and might wonder why Sinhala Buddhists in Sri Lanka should destroy Hindu Temples, it might come as a surprise that the Mahavamsa sanctions killing of Tamils! Says the Mahavamsa (Translated into English by Wilhelm Geiger, published by the Ceylon Government Information Department, Colombo 1950):-

“When he (Gamani) had slain all the Damilas (Tamils) he went up to the terrace of the palace..... looking back upon his glorious victory, great though it was knew no joy, remembering war wrought the destruction of million (of beings)”.

The Mahavamsa goes on to say how while Gamani was touched by remorse by the slaughter of Tamils, eight “arahants” flew through the air from India to comfort him. You have killed only one and a half human beings, they told him. “The one had come unto the (three refuges), the other had taken on himself the five (Buddhist) precepts. Unbelievers and men of evil were the rest, not more to be esteemed than beasts”. The “great king took comfort” by these words, says the Mahavamsa.

Although Hindus constitute only 15.5% of the island’s population, as against the nearly 70% Buddhists, the sway of Hinduism is island-wide- from the deep south of the island which houses the pre-historic shrine of Kathirgamam (Kataragama) dedicated to Lord Skanda or Lord Muruga and the entire breadth and width of the north eastern Tamil homeland. Hinduism, as an eclectic religion comprising many different metaphysical systems, and all embracing in outlook, has an appeal to the Sinhala Buddhists themselves, which Buddhism more a philosophy than a religion does not offer. In fact, Buddhism in Sri Lanka at the popular level, embraces the worship of Hindu gods and goddesses. That is the paradox and that is the inexplicable tragedy behind the attacks on Hindu temples and Hindu worship.

**S.Sivanayagam**  
**28.6.1998**

## **Destruction of Hindu Temples in Tamil Eelam and Sri Lanka**

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## **Destruction of Hindu Temples in Tamil Eelam and Sri Lanka**

Culture plays a crucial role in the life of a community. A community or a race is identified and revered by its flourishing culture. History shows that an oppressor, as a means of maintaining a superior position, aims to erase the identity of the oppressed and this means destroying first the oppressed people's culture. It is for this reason that the liberation struggle of an oppressed people assumes the form of cultural resistance.

In Tamil Eelam the culture and civilisation of the Tamils, which has a long, rich and valuable history is undergoing destruction on an unprecedented scale. Whilst on the one side, the Tamil national liberation struggle, embodying the role of preserving Tamil culture, strives towards defending and protecting Tamil identity and life, on the other, the Sri Lankan government, by inflicting atrocities and using its dominant chauvinism, has taken the path of causing maximum destruction to the Tamil people's culture. It has been a universally accepted principle that people living in a democratic land should be treated as equals, irrespective of language, ethnic or religious differences. But in Sri Lanka democracy itself is being crushed by the tyranny of the majority - the Sinhala Buddhist representatives - in Parliament. The well planned repression of the culture and the civilisation of the Tamils has fortunately, due to the vigorous resistance of the Tamil people, not been successful.



Tamil Eelam was once strewn with thousands of temples, churches, mosques, libraries, schools and statues of eminent persons and historical monuments. They were symbols of cultural richness; a national heritage revered with pride. Today many of them have been razed to the ground and others are in a dilapidated condition. All of this is due to an imperfect realisation of democracy, the tyranny of the majority. In other words, a tyranny of Buddhist fundamentalism.

To the Hindus, religion forms part and parcel of the daily activities of their life; it is part of their way of life. Living with nature, they respect and worship it. In this context temples not only stand as places of worship but are also an embodiment of cultural life; they are their cultural centres. Music, dance, drama, education, medicine and many other essential aspects of life evolve around the temples.

All five renowned Hindu shrines that existed long before the advent of Buddhism in Ceylon, - Thirukketheeswaram, Thirukkoneswaram, Naguleswaram, Munneswaram, and Thondeswaram - are now under the control of Sinhala Buddhist oppressors. The first three temples are under the direct control of the occupying armed forces of the Sri Lankan state which are made up entirely of Sinhala Buddhists except for a handful of Christians and Muslims. Thirukketheeswaram in the Mannar district and Thirukkoneswaram in the Trincomalee district once attracted devotees from India. Saints Thirugnanasampantha Moorthy (7th century A.D.) and Sunthara moorthy (9th Century A.D.) have sung hymns in praise of these temples. But today Thirukketheeswaram is in ruins. The historic temple was desecrated and the jewellery, brass utensils, oil lamps and many other valuables that were used in the temple have been plundered by the state armed forces. The Sri Lanka Army forced out residents living in the neighbourhood. Priests and devotees were not allowed into the temple vicinity, and from August 1990 soldiers in their thousands have occupied the temple and its surroundings. According to a letter from the Secretary of the Thirukketheeswaram Temple Restoration Society the **"most heinous and unforgivable part of the vandalism is the disfigurement and the gouging of the Third Eye of the icon Somaskanda (Lord Siva)"**. A letter from the Assistant Secretary of the Society, read that **"Not a single civilian is found within a radius of about three miles from the temple" ... "It is crystal clear that it was the army which caused all the destruction and wanton damage to the buildings around the temple" ... "In short,**

everything the Temple Restoration Society did from 1948 onwards, at great cost and with the help of Hindu devotees from various countries, has been undone by the Army". He goes on further to say "While we were at the ruined temple site we observed that even the debris of most of the demolished buildings like Kurukulam had disappeared. There we were very reliably informed that the building materials like stones, bricks and valuable sawn timber etc. had all been removed from the site and used for the construction of a buffer-like wall, similar to a rampart, north of Manthai junction, stretching towards Adampan. This was perhaps to prevent the guerrillas from advancing towards the encampment and also to attack them from behind the wall. Having destroyed the temple buildings with a vengeance the army seems to have had second thoughts and put to good use the building materials found in the debris by putting up the wall."

This destruction is reminiscent of similar destructions of Hindu temples by the Portuguese in the Sixteenth Century. In "A Short History of Hinduism in Ceylon" the author C. S. Navaratnam writes: "The Sixteenth Century was a turning point in the history of Hinduism in Ceylon. They (the Portuguese) had begun to establish themselves in the country districts, and little by little the popular temples were razed to the ground. With the fall of the Jaffna Kingdom in 1620 all traces of Hinduism were exterminated in the Tamil districts which came under their rule."

Thirukkoneswaram known as Southern Kailasam is another ancient Hindu temple that the Portuguese had blasted into the sea. Ruins of the temple are still lying on the seabed. During British rule, devotees were permitted to worship at the Swami Malai (Fort). In 1953 the structure for a new temple was laid and it was completed in April 1963. But the Hindu devotees are in constant fear that the state army occupying the fort, within which the temple is found, will either destroy it or harass them as they walk to the temple. In 1969 a Tamil Hindu minister requested the government in which he served to declare the temple premises a sacred zone. This was at a time when the government was declaring several Buddhist temple precincts to be sacred zones. But the government refused to accede to his request and the poor minister had no option but to resign from his ministerial post. Thereafter this temple too was vandalised several times.

In the early part of 1993 the temple was partly destroyed by the Sinhala Buddhists. The front door of the temple was burnt and statues and other



temple utensils were damaged. The premises of the High Priest too was damaged. Many army camps were put up around the temple area and devotees were not permitted to enter the Fort. Later, after great persuasion by the North East Provincial Council officers, the former President of Sri Lanka, Mr Premadasa, allowed access to the temple for the Priest, the holder of the temple keys, a cleaner and three or four devotees only. This access was allowed once a day and again the army at the temple premises had to agree to it. No praying rituals (poojas) were held, only lamps were lit by the priest. The other devotees had to stand miles away from the temple and they would worship facing the Swami Malai (Fort).

In May 1996 the state army restricted the number of devotees entering the temple during the festival period to between thirty five and fifty people only, and then shut the entrance gate of the Fort on the others. When the Chairman of the Town Council protested over the army's action, he was badly beaten up.

The intensity of Buddhist fundamentalism was visible in another incident which we must not fail to mention. The statue of the Hindu God Pillaiyar (Ganesh), worshipped not only by Hindus, but also sometimes by Buddhists was removed from the temple by a Sinhala Buddhist and thrown into the sea. The vicious person later scribbled on the wall of the temple: **"God Ganesh has gone for a bath"**. It is this kind of barbarism and intolerance which exist in a country claiming to have been visited by Buddha who preached compassion, tolerance and love.

Unlike the above two temples, Naguleswaram temple at Keerimalai in Jaffna was subjected to a different kind of treatment. The state army left this temple to the care of the state air force which dropped, not flowers from the sky, but deadly bombs. On 16th October 1990 about 4 pm three bombs were dropped. The first one fell on the front of the temple destroying two temple chariots and other buildings, the second one fell on the southern courtyard of the temple destroying the premises of the priest, and the third one fell on the northern courtyard destroying the Thurka Thevi temple and other buildings.

The Air Force was not satisfied with the extent of this damage. They came again after two days, on 18th October 1990, about 2.30 pm, and dropped

two more bombs on the very same temple. It was a special day and nearly a thousand devotees were in the temple area at that time. They all fled in panic in different directions trying to save their lives. Many got injured in the stampede. The temple and its magnificent kopuram, the halls, the library that possessed valuable palm leaf manuscripts, books, and many other statues were damaged by the bombings. All these took place in spite of the unmistakable temple identification flags which were flying on all four corners of the temple, as instructed by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Naguleswaram is not the only temple destroyed by the bombing carried out by the State Air forces. The Thurga Thevi temple at Thellipalai Jaffna, a centre of great veneration, was also bombed in May 1992 resulting in deaths and destruction.

There are countless numbers of temples that were set on fire, damaged or destroyed due to bombing and shelling by the Sri Lankan government forces during the last twenty five years. A glimpse of some evidence of this destruction is given in appendix I. Since 1977 the number of Hindu temples damaged, desecrated or destroyed by the bombing, shelling, arson and other weapons could be in the region of two thousand. A more accurate figure could not be taken because of the escalating war. But the Department of Hindu Affairs was able to gather some information on the number of temples damaged between 1983 and December 1990 and the estimated cost of their repair. According to the Department's report 1,479 temples had been damaged in eight districts of the North East Province, but they too were cautious concerning the accuracy of this figure.

**The destruction of temples is only one aspect of the Sri Lankan Government's grand plan to annihilate the Tamil people's culture. There are many other methods, such as arrest of Hindu priests, removing their sacred thread, beating them up, or humiliating them by keeping them incarcerated as Tiger suspects; firing shells on the devotees gathering at the temple on festival days so that no festival can be conducted; arresting and detaining devotees on their way to temples especially during festival seasons; desecrating the temples and prayer hall of Ramakrishna Mission by the police entering with their boots on; not appointing teachers who could teach Hinduism in the schools while at the same time appointing teachers of other denominations to teach**



religious studies other than Hinduism to Hindu students; appointing Sinhala Buddhist teachers in the places of Tamil Hindu teachers thus forcing students to follow their studies in Sinhala medium and to study Buddhism; indiscriminate bombing and strafing from naval gun boats; artillery shelling on the Deepavali festival day and other festive days; 'discovering' ruins of Buddhist temples in the Tamil homeland by Sinhala Buddhist Ministers and Buddhist archaeologists working for the Sri Lankan Government's Archaeological Department; forcibly removing Tamil residents in their thousands to refugee camps and settling Sinhala Buddhists in their place offering armed protection and new amenities including new Buddhist temples and Buddhist monks; erecting Buddha statues in prominent places in the Tamil homeland; creating Sinhala Buddhist settlements in the lands belonging to Hindu temples; converting Hindus as Buddhists by enticing them with the offer of economic advantages; implementing permanent birth control methods among Hindus living in plantation areas; destroying schools, libraries and community centres; killing experts in herbal medicine, art and culture, in particular folk drama and art.

At this juncture the inevitable questions arise: why does a large number of people following a religion which preaches love, compassion and tolerance, act in complete contrast to these Buddhist principles? How do they become imbued with such deep seated racism? Why did members of the Buddhist Sanga, including the prelates of Asgiriya and Malwatta actively involve themselves in fostering and promoting Buddhist fundamentalism? Why do Buddhist monks join the armed forces to kill Tamils, and why does the Maha Sanga donate money to the government's war fund? How have they arrived at a situation where members of the administration, from the President to the ordinary security guard and the members of the armed forces prostrate themselves before the Buddhist political monks and imbibe their chauvinism?

Here one thing in particular must be made clear, that there is no religious conflict between the Hindus and the Buddhists. Sinhala Buddhists are making fiery attempts through the World Fellowship of Buddhists to portray the national liberation struggle of the Tamils as mere religious conflict, so that it would appear as the actions of a bunch of fanatics. Their aim is to sap the strength and power of the struggle and thus destroy it. Their other aim is to use this false portrayal to seek the help of Buddhists all over the world,

pretending that Buddhists and Buddhism are being persecuted by Hindu Tamils. It is a trap laid for people engaged in the liberation struggle.

In the past Buddhist fundamentalists and members of the Maha Sanga were successful in scuttling attempts to solve the national question. In 1957 S W R D Bandaranaike, the then Prime Minister and leader of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, negotiated an agreement with S J V Chelvanayakam, the leader of the Federal Party. In 1965 Dudley Senanayake, the Prime Minister and leader of the United National Party, entered into an agreement with S J V Chelvanayakam. Subsequently, in 1984, when J R Jayawardane of the United National Party was in power as President of the country he convened an all party conference to find a solution. Again, in 1987 the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement was entered into between President J R Jayawardane and the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. All these attempts failed to bear fruit as the Sinhala Buddhist political leaders succumbed to the Maha Sangha and the political force of monks such as Baddegama Wimalawansa, Madihe Pannaseeha, Buddhaharita Thero, Palipane Chandrananda Maduluwawe Sobitha Thero and numerous others. The extremism of this coercion by the monks, who were intent on scuttling all attempts to solve the national question, is best illustrated by Somarama Thero who shot dead the Prime Minister S W R D Bandaranaike in September 1959 when the latter came out of his home to meet the monk and his group.

The prevailing unfortunate situation in Sri Lanka is the result of merging the concepts of country, Sinhala race and Buddhism, the cumulative effect of which has emerged as Sinhala Buddhist fundamentalism. It was Mahanama, the author of the Mahavamsa, a Buddhist chronicle, who set the stage for this painful drama. Actors carrying myths, fantasies, superstitions and fables from the Mahavamsa, particularly the Duttugamunu episode, gave birth to a "superior race", to "sons of the soil" and to "dhammadipa the home of the true doctrine" theories. The actors at each period in history varied in their form but the substance remained the same. These myths and superstitions were put forward as historical facts and whilst propagating militant role of Buddhism they pronounced that "only a Buddhist had the legitimate right to rule" and rulers were not allowed to deviate an inch in following this.

In the 1930s Aryan racial superiority propagated by the Nazis in Germany, echoed in Ceylon through Don David Hewavitharane who changed his name to Anagarika Dharmapala. Others like Munidasa Kumarathunga (writer),



Piyadasa Sirisena (editor: Sinhala Jathiya), A. E. Goonesinghe (trade union leader and publisher of Viraya), followed the footsteps of Anagarika Dharmapala. The origin of Sinhalese people was traced to the Aryan race and they were elevated to "master race" overnight by these "historians". People other than Sinhala Buddhists were called as "infidels of degraded race" and "unbelievers and men of evil life". Sinhala Buddhists were called upon to unite under one flag and to wage a holy war under a leader equal to that of Hitler's calibre, against the non Buddhists. **"The Sinhalese are a unique race in as much as they can boast that they have no slave blood in them and never were conquered either by pagan Tamils or European vandals...the Sinhalese stand as the representatives of Aryan civilisation,"** Anagarika Dharmapala said. The racist policies of Hitler and Mussolini were well received and emulated by the local leaders during this time. **"We are one blood and one nation. We are a chosen people. The Buddha said that his religion would last for 5000 years. That means that we as the custodians of that religion shall last as long"**. These words were uttered in 1939 by D S Senanayake who later became the first Prime Minister of Ceylon after independence. The present President Chandrika Bandaranayake's recent launch of the programme **"We are Sri Lankan; One people One nation"** at Anuradhapura is the modern day equivalent of D S Senanayake's Mein Kampf. The racist thoughts of Sinhala Buddhist leaders, past and present, are countless but a glimpse is given in appendix II.

Did Buddha ever come to Ceylon is another question which no one dares to raise now. Professor Paranavitana, an ardent Sinhala Buddhist, absent mindedly said in one meeting that there was no justification for the belief that the Buddha did visit the island of Ceylon. This caused a huge outburst and a torrent of abuse was heaped on Paranavitana. Though Buddha's visit to Ceylon is described in Mahavamsa, Dipavamsa, and Vamsatthappakasini, each account varies in certain respects. However all three allege that the Yakkhas, the original inhabitants of the island, were harassed and tormented by Buddha who forced them to flee. According to Vamsatthappakasini "Buddha used his supernatural powers to harass the Yakkhas with eleven different types of afflictions. Torrential rains and hurricanes descended on them. They were pelted with showers of stones, weapons, burning embers, hot ashes and mud. Cold and humid winds, storms, and darkness torment and terrify them". Buddha was said to have been "victorious over enemies", and in another story as "jina" or "Conqueror". To quote from Mahavamsa "Lanka was known to the Conqueror as a place where his doctrine should

shine in glory and from Lanka filled with Yakkhas, the Yakkhas must (first) be driven forth," so that Lanka would be a "fit dwelling place for men".

Pujavaliya, a prose work of the 13th Century, says "This island belongs to the Buddha himself, it is like a treasury filled with the Three Gems. Therefore the residence of wrong believers in this island will never be permanent, just as the residence of the Yakkhas of old was not permanent". Here non Buddhists are referred to as wrong believers. The actions attributed to Buddha are now taken as a precedent to justify the continuing myth of racial superiority from Duttagamunu to Chandrika Bandaranaike. Out of the thirty seven chapters in the Mahavamsa the author Mahanama has devoted eleven chapters to the life of Duttagamunu whose racism and militarism are enthusiastically followed by successive Sri Lankan governments up to and including Chandrika Bandaranaike's regime.

In his war against Ellaalan, Duttagamunu's killings of Tamils is portrayed as no more unpious an act than the actions of Buddha as he terrified the Yakkhas and forced them to flee from the island. "Only one and a half human beings have been slain here by thee O Lord of men. The one had come unto the refuge the other had taken on himself the five precepts. Unbelievers and men of evil life were the rest, no more to be esteemed than beasts". This is how the exploits of Duttagamunu were recounted to him by eight men of Bikkhood - arahants - after his victory over the Tamils which entailed the "killing of thirty Tamil Kings" and the "destruction of millions". It is no surprise therefore that the present day equivalent explanations of the killings of Tamils are put forward by modern "historians", as "erasing out Tamil terrorists".

It is also disturbing to note how Duttagamunu's mother, Vihara Mahadevi, who accompanied her son with five hundred monks in the war against Tamils, was filled with a Hitler-like blood thirstiness. According to the Mahavamsa, when pregnant with Gamunu she would long to "eat the honey that remained when she had given twelve thousand Bhikkus to eat of it, and then she longed to drink (the water) that had served to cleanse the sword with which the head of the first warrior among King Elara's (Ellalan) warriors had been struck off, (and she longed to drink it) standing on this very head..."

Here we must understand the connection between this description of



Duttagamunu's mother and the pinning of a Vihara Mahadevi badge to the uniforms of young Sinhala women of the Sri Lankan army women's corps as recently as a year ago, when they completed their training under the rule of President Chandrika Bandaranaike. Over the years Prime Ministers and Presidents have participated in such occasions, implanting the same blood thirsty racism into the war mission of the newly qualifying cadets. Chandrika Bandaranaike's call upon the armed forces to save the country, publicly praising them, promoting them to the highest positions of office, glorifying war and allowing Buddhist monks on to the battle field to bless the army for their victory, are all part of her "military solution" to the Tamil national liberation struggle.

An advertisement appearing in August 1996 in a leading Sinhala newspaper "Lanka Deepa" called upon the "Brave sons of Duttagamunu's lineage to join the navy". The imagery used confirms the racist nature of the actions of the present government. No wonder the continuity of racism in Sri Lanka and its nightmarish growth into fascism, have become a horrifying spectre on the world stage.

The victory ceremonies that took place in Jaffna and Colombo after the capture of the vacated Jaffna peninsula in December 1995 by the Sri Lankan army were made to remind the "conquests" of Mahavamsa fame. Chandrika Bandaranaike, who is both the President of Sri Lanka and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, General Anurudha Ratwatte, the Deputy Defence Minister, and the Commanders of the Army, Navy and Air Forces, all became reincarnations of Duttagamunu, Sapumal Kumara and their retinue. They were praised for bringing Lanka "under one parasol of State" and "making Lanka fit for humankind" by destroying Tamil 'terrorists'. The war and the killings of Tamils were rationalised and celebrated by them whilst evoking the past legends and myths. "Not for the joy of sovereignty but for the religion do I wage this battle" Duttagamunu has declared during his war. The present regime too declared and glorified their war in similar fashion.

Duttagamunu, the old conqueror, marched with "Buddha's relic in his spear", proclaiming violence in the name of piety. Whereas the new avatars paraded with the latest weapons supplied by the USA, China and Israel, and their Buddhist lion flag, proclaiming "war for peace". In a pompous ceremony held in Colombo, the "exalted one", President Chandrika, was presented a scroll on a platter that proclaimed the capture of Yappa patna

(Jaffna) reminiscent of the conquests of the past, by General Ratwatte. The President and the Generals of today were of course masked themselves with symbols of acceptability, with white lotuses and doves, using kind, compassionate words to present an attractive humane face to the outside world. Like the eight arahants who told Duttagamunu that he had killed only one and a half human beings, the sons and daughters of Goebbels employed by the media today, say that all who are killed in the North and East provinces of Sri Lanka are not Tamil civilians, but terrorists, murderers, and megalomaniacs. A selected few sons were sent abroad by President Chandrika to propagate her "Dhamma". It was not the branches of the Bo tree that they took with them, but instead lessons of deceit, lies and disinformation learnt from international masters.

Since 'independence' in 1948 the sons and daughters of the 'master race' who graduated from the school of Buddhist fundamentalism have successfully institutionalised racism through the Citizenship Act, Parliamentary Elections (amendment) Act, the Srimala - Sastri pact, the Sinhala Only Act, the new Republican constitutions, the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the Emergency Regulations etc. Realising that "only a Buddhist had the legitimate right to rule", Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike (President Chandrika's father) abandoned Christianity and became a Buddhist when he entered politics. He formed the first communal organisation called the Sinhala Maha Saba (Sinhala Great Council) in 1937, four years after the death of Anagarika Dharmapala. Since then he became the political heir to Anagarika Dharmapala's Buddhist fundamentalism. He came to power with the slogan "Sinhala Only" and the support of the United Monks Front. His wife, Srimavo (the present Prime Minister of Sri Lanka) carried forward the same fundamentalist principles while also declaring that "Tamil people in Sri Lanka have always been among the most privileged minorities in the world"... "You speak of oppression of the Tamils. That is your propaganda. There could have been administrative mistakes; errors of judgement; but oppression or deliberate discrimination never". She and her government promulgated the first Republican Constitution in 1972, in which Buddhism was elevated to "foremost place" and it has become the government's duty to "protect and foster" same. Other religions were relegated to a lesser constitutional position. By this act she became the first person to destroy the secular nature of the state by means of constitution. Further, constitutional status was given by her to Sinhala as the country's only official language by this new constitution. In 1961, during the non-



violent struggle of the Tamils (Satyagraha) Srimavo declared state of emergency and sent the state army to the Tamil homeland and in justifying it she declared, **"At times like these we must lay aside political and religious differences. This is the hour of everybody to unite against the enemies of the nation and of the people"**. Here non-violent Tamils were referred to as enemies of the nation and people. This worst rhetoric of nationalism was the result of her close association with two Sinhala Buddhist fanatical organisations called Campaign for the Protection of Motherland and the Sinhala Bala Mandalaya.

Junius Richard Jayawardane, former President of Sri Lanka, preached "Dharmishta Society" and Buddhist values, but practised fascism. His inclination for "one nation one people" and viewing Tamil national liberation struggle as "terrorism" was aired publicly in his opening address to the Parliament in February 1984, when he said "The borders of Sri Lanka are Point Pedro and Devinuwara in the north and south; Batticaloa and Colombo in the east and west..... We have to combat "terrorism and defeat it with all the resources at our command. We may have to equip ourselves to do so at the expense of development and social and economic welfare plans. **Let us then unitedly decide to do so and as one nation and one people bend ourselves to this task"**. In an interview with the correspondent of London Daily Telegraph (11-7-84) he reflected his fascist stand by saying "I have tried to be effective for sometime but cannot. I am not worried about the opinion of the Tamil people now. Now we cannot think of them. Not about lives or of their opinion about us. Nothing will happen in our favour until the terrorists are wiped out. Just that. You cannot cure an appendix patient until you remove the appendix. The more you put pressure in the north the happier the Sinhala people will be here. Really, if I starve the Tamils out, the Sinhala people will be happy". Walpola Rahula, a Buddhist Monk and a University Vice Chancellor, justified violence to 'save Buddhism'. There were many others. L H Mettananda, F R Jayasuriya, K M P Rajaratna, Cyril Matthew, Iriyagolla, Gamini Dissanayake, Lalith Athulath Mudali are but a few. The new "Conqueror" Chandrika Bandaranaike, by following the crude racism of her parents, descended quickly to a level of fascism that would delight modern day neo Nazis.

At first Buddha asked the Yakkhas, the aborigines of Ceylon, only for a place to sit, but finally he drove them from their homeland. Vijaya, the supposed founder of Sinhala race, invaded the island of Ceylon with his

followers and married Kuveni, a native Yakkhini princess. He conquered the island and its people with her help. When he achieved full control and power, he did not proclaim her as his queen but chased her and their two children away and banished them. Chandrika Bandaranaike, following the footsteps of Buddha and Vijaya and other Sinhala Buddhist political leaders who reneged on the agreements and pacts with the Tamil politicians since 1920s, asked the Tamils to cast their vote to her "for peace and not war" and after they did, she removed her mask and terrorised them from their homeland with her programme of "war for peace" to create "one people one nation". The original inhabitants, the Yakkhas and the Nagas, were dehumanised and demonised by the Buddhists, and the Veddas (another indigenous people of the island) have now been stripped of their language, culture and way of life and forced to assimilate with the Sinhalese. Tamils living in the plantation areas are facing a similar fate. In the case of the Tamils living in Tamil Eelam, where assimilation was not possible, Chandrika Bandaranaike chose destruction by war. **Does she know how many thousands of bombs her forces have dropped on Tamils so far? Does she know the extent of death and destruction caused from shelling by her forces?**

We were told that King Asoka had a troubled conscience after his mass killings. Similarly it was suggested that Duttagamunu too had a troubled conscience after he killed millions of Tamils. But we have yet to see a President, Prime Minister or General in Sri Lanka with a troubled conscience. This is the terrible consequence of the reality of a deeply ingrained Buddhist fundamentalism that has been revived and rejuvenated time and time again.



## APPENDIX I



of the Sinhala military. The Tamils are under attack by air, land and sea. The above number includes Hindu priests and their families. Christian priests too had been killed by the Sinhala military. Fleeing people who had sought refuge in churches were killed when the warplanes dropped heavy bombs on the church buildings.

During times of military offensive in Tamil areas Hindu shrines had been targeted for destruction. Valuables found in the temple had been robbed by the froces. Valuable historical records and religious artifacts are reduced to ashes. Before the start of a military offensive it is customary for the Defense Ministry to issue a statement advising the civilians to stay in temples churches and schools. But invariably these are the very places which are generally bombed and shelled by the Sinhala military. Many of the above buildings are now in ruins due to aerial bombing and artillery fire.

We state that more than 1,800 Hindu Temples of the North - East and the properties belonging thereto, had thus far been destroyed and rendered unfit for worship since the beginning of the conflict.

Indiscriminate arrests of Hindu priests in the areas under military control and their disappearance thereafter, have reduced the number of Hindu priests now involvd in religious pursuits. In fact the Hindu priesthood is now an endangered species.

Some Hindu temples are now in the use of the military as sentries, checkpoints and even as army camps. Charity homes for the poor managed by the Hindus are similarly desecrated. Valuable brassware used for cooking purposes had been appropriated for the use of the military.

Most of the Tamil and Sanskrit scriptures both printed and in manuscript found in the temples are now in ashes. Our heritage is irretrievably lost. Valuble temple chariots and wooden statues are also burnt down. Stone and metal figures had been smashed to bits.

We can go on reciting a long litany of crimes committed against our houses of religion. We rest content with annexing hereto an annexure setting in detail particulars of some of the most important Hindu shrines destroyed by the Sinhala Buddhist military.

We request the UN and its various agencies to :

- a) Cry halt to the denial of religious freedom in Sri Lanka.
- b) Bring pressure on the Sri Lanka Government to stop the destruction of Hindu shrines and properties
- c) Guarantee the life and safety of the Hindu Priesthood officiating in the Hindu temples and shrines.

Thanking you Sir,  
We remain,

Signed..... Signed.....  
President Secretary



# Annexure

In 1996, when the Nanthavil Amman temple at Kondavil, was subjected to aerial bombardment four devotees were killed on the spot. The temple also was badly damaged.

## JAFFNA DISTRICT ISLAND AREA.

NO. PLACE	TEMPLE
1. Nainathivu	Nagapoosani Amman Temple damaged -02 'Chithira cars', 'Chapparam' 01 Manjam ( worth many lakhs of rupees ) Chief priest also attacked by the army. Sivan Temple.
2. Kayts	Buveneswari Amman Temple.
3. Karainagar	Eelaththu Sithamparam Temple.
4. Karainagar	Thiruvankaaddu Sithy Vinayagar Temple
5. Mandaitivu	Maariamman Temple
6. Pungudutivu	Thanthontrieaswarar Temple.
7. Naranthanai	

## JAFFNA DISTRICT VADAMARADCHY

NO. PLACE	TEMPLE
1. Valvettiturai	a) Muthumari Amman Temple b) Sivan Temple
2. Puloly	Pasupathy Sivan Temple
3. Nagarkovil	Kottuvasal Amman Temple
4. Vallipuram	Vallipuram Aalvar Temple
5. Selva Sannathy	Murugan Temple
6. Atchuvely	Pillaiyar Temple

And in all about 140 temples were damaged.

Further in 1994 the car of the temple known as 'Chithirath Ther' was set fire to.

In 1995, when the Maviddapuram Kandasamy Temple was subjected to bombardment, the temple priest lost one of his legs in that attack.

## JAFFNA DISTRICT THENMARADCHCHI

NO. PLACE	TEMPLE
1. Puloppalai	Murugan Temple
2. Vettalaikerni	Vinayagar Temple
3. Iyakachchi	Murugan Temple

And sixty other temples were damaged.

## MANNAR DISTRICT

NO. PLACE	TEMPLE
1. Thiruketheeswaram	Sivan Temple
2. Mannar	Murugan Temple
3. Thalaimannar	Vinayagar Temple

About 20 temples in all were damaged in the district.

## VAVUNIYA

NO. PLACE	TEMPLE
1. Omanthai	Vinayagar Temple
2. Omanthai	Kannaki Amman Temple
3. Nedunkerni	Murugan Temple

Twenty temples in all in this district were affected.

The particulars of the destructions and damages caused to temples and temple properties in the North-East Province by aerial bombardments as well as, mortar shellings are appended below.

## JAFFNA DISTRICT VALIGAMAM

NO. PLACE	TEMPLE
1. Keerimalai	Nakuleswaram Temple
2. Thellippalai	Durga Amman Temple
3. Maviddapuram	Kandaswamy Temple
4. Mathakal	Murugamoorthy Temple
5. Ponnalai	Varadharajah Temple
6. Alaveddy	Kumpilavalai Vinayagar Temple
7. Sandilippai	Irradayarpuran Vairavar Temple



NO.	PLACE	TEMPLE
8.	Avarangal	Sivan Temple
9.	Punnalaikadduvan	Ayakkadaval Vinayagar Temple
10.	Nallur	Kandaswamy Temple
11.	Chunnakam	Kathiramalai Sivan Temple
12.	Manippay	Maruthady Vinayagar Temple
13.	Navally	Murugan Temple
14.	Jaffna Fort	Muniappar Temple
15.	Columbuthurai	Murugan Temple
16.	Villundy	Kandaswamy Temple

And more than 800 temples in all damaged in the Valikamam area.

In addition in 1989, during the 'Mahotshava' ceremony of the Suthumalai Amman temple, the assistant priest of the temple was killed on the spot by aerial bombardment.

In 1992, a priest of the Maviddapuram Kandasamy temple lost his limbs due to bombing.

#### MULLAITIVU DISTRICT

NO.	PLACE	TEMPLE
1.	Vattappalai	Vattappalai Amman Temple Car (Ther) burnt (1990)
2.	Ottysuttan	Ottysuttan Thanthontreaswaran Temple bombarded (1991)
3.	Thanneeroottu	Thanneeroottu Pillaiyar Temple Car (Ther) destroyed by bombardment of the temple.
4.	Karaichchikudiyiruppu	Karaichchikudiyiruppu Pillaiyar Temple

In all eighty temples were damaged.

#### KILINOCHCHI DISTRICT

NO.	PLACE	TEMPLE
1.	Kilinochchi	Kilinochchi Kandasamy Temple
2.	Iranamadu	Iranamadu Kanagambikai Amman Temple
3.	Paranthan	Kumarapuram Murugan Temple
4.	Pallangkany	Pallangkany Pillaiyar Temple
5.	Vattakachchi	Vattakachchi Pillaiyar Temple

6.	Uruthirapuram	Uruthirapuram Sivan Temple
7.	Pullimpokkanai	Pullimpokkanai Nagathambiran Temple
8.	Ponnakari	Poonakari Kottai Muniappar Temple
9.	Poorikadawai	Porrikadawai Amman Temple

#### TRINCOMALEE DISTRICT

NO.	PLACE	TEMPLE
1.	Koneswaram	Thirukoneswaram Temple
2.	Thambalakamam	Thambalakamam Sivan Temple
3.	Villuntri	Villuntri Kanadaswamy Temple

In all one hundred and twenty temples were damaged.

#### BATTICALOA DISTRICT

NO.	PLACE	TEMPLE
1.	Kokkatticholai	Kokkatticholai Sivan Temple
2.	Anaipanthi	Anaipanthi Vinayagar Temple
3.	Arayampathy	Arayampathy Murugan Temple
4.	Kallady	Kallady Uppodai Vinayagar Temple
5.	Porativu	Porativu Pathirakali Amman Temple
6.	Mamangam	Mamangam Pillaiyar Temple
7.	Akkaraipattu	Akkaraipattu Nageswara Temple

In all two hundred and forty temples were destroyed.

#### AMPARAI DISTRICT

NO.	PLACE	TEMPLE
1.	Kerativu	Kerativu Kannaki Amman Temple
2.	Mandoor	Mandoor Kandaswamy Temple

In all forty temples were damaged in this area.

#### KANDY DISTRICT

NO.	PLACE	TEMPLE
1.	Kandy	a) Pillaiyar Temple, 24 figures of the deities desecrated. b) Hindu Wedding Hall burnt down together with the Pillaiyar Temple building on 25.01.1998.



## THIRUKETHEESWARAM TEMPLE RESTORATION SOCIETY

30th January 199

Her Excellency Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga  
President of the Republic of Sri Lanka

Your Excellency,

### Damage to Thiruketheeswaram Temple Mannar District, Sri Lanka

Hindus of Sri Lanka, India and rest of the world bring to your attention, with great sorrow and shock of the untold damages that have been done to the ancient and historic temple of Thiruketheeswaram by the Sri Lankan Army under the UNP regime. Not only damage has been caused to the temple fabric but also desecrating it in the most shameful way. The temple properties have all been plundered and pillaged. The priests, their assistants, other employees and residents in the vicinity of Thiruketheeswaram and Manthai village have been terrorised and forcibly driven away from their homes. The pilgrims' rests and residences of trustees have been destroyed making them totally uninhabitable. In short, it was simply a scorched earth operation which even the Nazi troops did not do, under Hitler - the Nazi Dictator! **Most heinous and unforgivable part of the vandalism is the disfigurement and the gouging the THIRD EYE of the Icon Somaskanda (Lord Siva).**

Details of this awful vandalism and destruction were brought to the notice of the then government by the trustees. Nothing was done! Your Excellency, this great temple was of ancient origin, rebuilt by the Chola Emperors in the 9th and 10th Centuries. It was destroyed by the Portuguese invaders. The restoration has to await independence and began in 1948 after independence. Hindus has spent about twenty million rupees for the first phase of the restoration work. Two more phases remain to be completed. I might add that generous assistance was given by the Government of Tamil Nadu under the late Chief Minister Hon. M.G. Ramachandran and also Hon. Karunanithi, the previous Chief Minister towards the cause. Also the Adnhra Pradesh Government donated Rs. 1,00,000.00 and similarly the Pondicheri Government. The former President of Srilanka, His Excellency

J.R. Jayawardena also donated Rs. 5,00,000.00 out of the President's Fund towards the restoration work. Apart from these, Hindus of Sri Lanka and overseas had liberally contributed towards the worthy cause. Alas! The meritorious work and sacrifices of the Hindus of Sri Lanka and the world over have been virtually decimated by the action of the army under the UNP administration.

This is an ancient and most venerated temple in Sri Lanka belonging to pre-historic era. Thiruketheeswaram Temple is situated in the Mannar District and is the most sacred place of pilgrimage for the Hindus in Sri Lanka. It is revered by the Buddhists too and referred to in the Buddhists' Chronicles. Maha Sivarathri is the most important one-day annual festival. About 2 1/2 lakhs of pilgrims attend the festival. The Maha Sivarathri is a Public Holiday. The visual representation of the Formless Absolute in manifest Anthromorphic Forms in indispensible part of the temple worship. In this process the most important representation is Lord Siva the family group of SOMASKANDA ie. Siva with His Consort UMA and their Son SKANDA.

The enclosed photo depicts the figure of Somaskanda when it was in the process of being cast. It is 4 1/2 ft. in height, exquisite and most expressive in it's serenity and majestic poise. It was made in metal composed of Copper, Brass and Tin Lead with liberal quantities of Gold and Silver donated by devotees in the year 1976 at a cost of Rs. 20,00,000.00.

The third eye of the Icon was implanted in Gold, similarly the artistic heavy ornamentation around the neck and arms were too implanted in Gold. This Gold has been violently scooped out and removed by the vandals. It is the most cruel and unbearable act of vandalism that has left a deep wound in the religious feelings of the Hindu public which is difficult to heal. This admirable Icon fascinated the hearts of thousands of devotees evoking the most piety. My eyes were filled with tears when I penned the draft of this petition.

Your Excellency, Hindus and Buddhists are members of the same family of religions. Both religions have contributed for the good of humanity. Therefore, we earnestly request you that places of worship of Hindus in Sri Lanka should be fully protected in the future and be saved from similar desecration, damage and plunder.